

## Christmas Play: Four Gifts

Written by Joanna Richards ©

First performed at Elk Lake Baptist Church, December 2018, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

**Director Notes:** This play was written to show how Jesus' calling and identity as ruler, shepherd, Emmanuel (God with us) and saviour meets our deepest human needs. The play can be adapted to the children/teens you have in your congregation. The age recommendations are suggestions; a strong young actor can take on a part for an older child. Actions are indicated in brackets and italics.

### Actors:

Narrator/Messenger: Age 12 and above.

Lost Wanderer: Age 12 and above.

Children 1 through 5: Ages 6 and above.

Child 6: Age 8 and above

Child 7: Age 8 and above

Boss: Age 12 and above

Follower 1: Age 10 and above

Follower 2: Age 10 and above

Sceptic 1: Age 10 and above

Sceptic 2: Age 10 and above

Joe: Age 14 and above

Christine: Age 14 and above

**Required Actors:** 11 minimum (requires doubling up on parts); 16 maximum

### Set up and Instructions:

This **play** has **seven scenes** and requires projecting one YouTube video in Scene 6, as indicated.

Each scene should have **costumes** tailored to the characters.

The **backdrop** can be very plain. For **props**: Scene 2 requires a sign that says "Bus Stop"; Scene 3 requires a table, chairs and a business chart; Scene 4 requires a blanket on a chair, remote control and smart phone; Scene 5 requires a table, chair, deck of cards and laundry in a laundry basket; Scene 7 requires four wrapped gifts as indicated in the scene (map, appointment card, Magic Eraser, and cup).

**Lights** go up and down as indicated in the script.

## Scene 1 - The Calling

*(Lights are out for this narration.)*

Narrator/Messenger:

But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
Are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

For out of you will come **a ruler**  
Who will be **the shepherd** of my people Israel.

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel  
– which means, “**God with us.**”

Give him the name **Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.

## Scene 2 - Looking Lost

*(Lights come up on a small group of children who are gathered, waiting for a bus. The Lost Wanderer comes in dressed in a sheep skin vest looking lost – his/her lost miming gets more and more complex as time passes. The children waiting at the bus start whispering among each other.)*

Child 1: What is he doing?

Child 2: It looks like he’s trying to decide where to go.

Child 3: Or play a complex game of duck-duck-goose with himself.

Child 4: I think he may be taking a small break from reality.

Child 5: What is he wearing?

Child 2: Looks like a sheepskin.

Child 1: Do you think we should offer some help?

Child 5: He needs *something*.

Child 2: *(snide laugh)* Probably trying to locate that missing marble.

Child 6: Now now, that’s not nice. I’m going to ask.

Child 4: Yeah, let's ask.

Child 3: This should be good.

*Group shuffles over together and Child 6 taps the Lost Wanderer on the shoulder.*

Child 6: Ahem. Excuse me, but we couldn't help but notice you're looking....a little.....shall we say....lost.

Lost Wanderer: Lost? Oh I'm not lost, I simply don't know where I am.

Others: *muffled laughter*

Child 7: Right. Ok, well, do you know where you are trying to get to?

Lost Wanderer: Yes, yes, of course! Don't we all know where we're trying to get to? House. Wife. 2.3 kids, a dog and a goldfish. \$80 thousand a year *minimum* plus time to meditate, exercise, eat healthy, nurture relationships, pursue interests, get better and better jobs, prove to the world you turned out to have more potential than when you graduated high school as an average student getting average grades with average sporting ability spending time with your average friends and of course ....(*deep breath*) be in the moment.

Others: *less muffled laughter*

Lost Wanderer: So yes, I know exactly where I'm trying to get to, I just don't know how to *get* there.

Child 6: Okaaaaay. Well, how far along do you think you are now?

Lost Wanderer: (*Thinks for a moment.*) According to my calculations, (*pulls out smart phone*) I'm exactly 1% along the path, with a 2% margin of error, 19 times out of 20.

Child 7: Sounds like you need a guide. A shepherd if you will.

Child 5: Yeah, good call!

Child 1: Shepherds are the best!

Lost Wanderer: What is this *shepherd* you speak of? I'm quite sure I don't need much more than my mind, my goals and Google.

Child 2: Google is pretty good.

Child 4: What did we do before Google?

Child 3: My mom had en-cy-clo-pe-di-as (*slowly sound it out*).

Child 2: Is that like Wikipedia?

Child 3: Yeah, only more out of date, with less information, in heavy books.

Child 1: Geez, the dark ages.

Child 3: I think they also asked “the experts” and “old people” more.

Child 2: I’ve heard they just talked to each other more generally. Like....in person...with words.

Child 5: Crazy.

Child 6: Annnnyyywwaaaayy, mister, I think you need a shepherd. You seem lost, and ..... you look a bit like a sheep.

Child 7: And I hate to point this out, but if you’re only 1% towards where you’re trying to get to, with a 2% margin of error, you might be 1% in the wrong direction!

Lost Wanderer: Hmmph. I’ve never thought of it quite like that. Well. I’ll think about it. Shepherd you say? Shep-herd. One who herds the sheps. Could be good. Could be very good. (*strokes invisible beard*). Alright. Where do I find this herder of sheps?

Child 6: Oh not to worry, he’ll find you.

*(Lights out)*

### **Scene 3 - Lacklustre Leadership**

*Group is assembled around a boardroom table with graphs and pie charts.*

Boss: Well team, we seem to be at a place where it’s time to make some important decisions. I’ve developed this decision matrix to enable us to arrive at the perfect decision.

Follower 1: Well done chief.

Follower 2: Looks great!

Sceptic 1: I'm sceptical.

Sceptic 2: Ditto.

Boss: Let me show you how it works. You see we have time on the x axis, quality on the y axis and all we need to do is decide our target market, and we'll land the product we need to create.

Follower 2: Oh I get it, so it will either be quick and crummy, or long and durable.

Follower 1: That makes sense to me!

Boss: That's exactly right. You two are sharp. Keep this up and you'll have my job (*big belly laugh*). We'll decide if we're aiming at people who want to buy a cheap product over and over, or a high quality product that lasts a lifetime.

Sceptic 1: Hold up. While of course I don't mind if tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum here move into management, (*to the audience*) – seems like an obvious progression - there are so many factors you're not taking into account.

Sceptic 2: I agree. What about cost?

Sceptic 1: Our product could be high quality and made quickly....

Sceptic 2: We could staff up, invest in capital, but it will cost us a pretty penny.

Sceptic 1: And what about our relationships with our suppliers, if we try to do it too quickly, we could jeopardize those relationships.

Sceptic 2: Right. And we haven't surveyed our customer base yet to know what they want.

Boss: What my title?

Followers 1 and 2: President and CEO.

Boss: Good. And who makes the decisions?

Follower 1: You do!

Follower 2: The best decisions.

Follower 1: Yes! The best!

Boss: You are here to implement *my* decisions.

Sceptic 1: I thought the best decisions were made with many voices?

Sceptic 2: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

Boss: That's enough! Do you think you're in charge? You're not in charge. I'm in charge. Me! Dissenting opinions will not be tolerated here.

Sceptic 1: (*Speaking to Sceptic 2*) We need a better ruler to right this ship.

Sceptic 2: Where do we find one?

(*Light out.*)

#### **Scene 4 - Loneliness**

(*Lonely Girl sitting watching TV, flipping through the channels. Gets frustrated because nothing's on and turns it off.*)

Lonely Girl: What am I doing? When did tv get so boring? Maybe I'll go on Facebook for a while.

*Pulls out phone and starts to scroll through*

Oh look, Jamie's on vacation in Italy with Paula..... Cynthia got a bunny for her kids.... Jenna's not looking forward to Monday but has a new lipstick to get her through. Tina's relationship status has been updated to ....engaged! Maybe I'll write a post. Hmmmm, *starts to type* "Typical night, nothing on tv," no, that's lame. No one will like that. "Big weekend plans.....hoping to.....find something interesting on tv...." Ugh. "Typical night, feeling .... bored." *Pause.* What am I doing? (*Drops phone. Walks to front of stage to look out the window.*) Feeling .... terrible.

No, that's not it. Lonely. I feel.....lonely.

I like my job. I like my place. I like ice cream. I'm not fulfilled. I want to watch tv *with* someone. I want to share my place. I want to eat ice cream with a friend. Yes, yes, people are annoying. I'm annoying. But this, this is not how it's meant to be.

I don't want to be alone anymore.

(*Lights out*)

## Scene 5 - Sinful Anger

*(Lights come up on Joe playing solitaire at a table. Christine walks in carrying a laundry basket. She starts to fold laundry as they talk.)*

Christine: Hey Joe, I couldn't help but notice you left the toilet seat up again. I'm wondering if you could try a bit harder to remember to do that?

Joe: Remember to leave it up? Say no more. You got it.

Christine: Ha ha, very funny. You know what I mean. It's gross and I don't like having to put it down all the time.

Joe: All the time? Are you sure it's all the time?

Christine: *(rolls eyes)* Well I haven't been keeping a tracking sheet but it feels pretty regular, so yes I think it's just about all the time.

Joe: Well I *have* been trying to remember, and I feel a little insulted that you haven't noticed the times that I *have* put it down.

Christine: Now, now, no need to get insulted. I'm just giving you another reminder that it's important to me that the seat is down.

Joe: And I'm trying to give *you* a little reminder that I *have* been trying to remember, and you seem to only be able to remember the times I haven't put it down, rather than the times I have.

Christine: I don't like your tone.

Joe: I don't like your attitude.

Christine: I'm sick of having this conversation. Grow up!

Joe: Grow up?? You want to talk about growing up?? You still sleep with a stuffed animal and wear little girl tights out in public. I'll take you seriously when you start acting your age.

Christine: *(through gritted teeth)* Are you seriously criticizing me for Bo-Bo and my clothing choices, so that you can get out of the simple courtesy of allowing me not to touch your pee on the toilet seat every time I use the bathroom?

Joe: Get it right Christine, it's not every time, you're acting like a total princess, and you don't appreciate me for the things I do, do in this relationship.

Christine: Well enlighten me! What are those things? Because from as far as I can see, all you do is play cards, eat food and pee on the toilet seat!

Joe: Well thanks a lot! You are so incredibly self-centred you don't even notice the million little things I do to make your life better, and I'm sick of it. I'm sick of you!

Christine: *(Gasps. Leaves crying.)*

*(Lights out)*

## Scene 6 - Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA>

## Scene 7 - The Gifts

*(Lights come up on four players standing centre stage: Lost Wanderer, Boss, Lonely Girl, and Jim/Sinful Anger. Each player will receive the gift of freedom from their suffering.)*

All four: *Chattering about how they got there.*

Boss: Did you get the invitation?

Lost Wanderer: It showed up in my mailbox with this time and date.

Lonely Girl: Same here.

Joe/Angry: Who do you think it's from?

*(Messenger walks in carrying gifts.)*

Messenger: Ah, how marvellous, you've all arrived. I have a Christmas gift for each of you from the Master.

*(Messenger hands out small boxes to each one. They unwrap.)*

Lost Wanderer: It's a map! I got a map! Look "you are here". Here I am! I've never been here before!

Boss: Ah cool. I wish I got a map. All I got is a wash-cloth and a Mr. Clean magic eraser.

Lonely Girl: Those magic erasers really are magic. My nephew put lipstick on the walls and it came off like a dream. I got an appointment card – looks like someone's coming to my house for lunch today. Strange.

Joe/Angry: Strange but intriguing! More intriguing than mine. I've got a cup.

Messenger: The Master has something special for each of you this Christmas. You may not see him, you may not always feel him, but he sees you and knows you. *(Speaking to the Lost Wanderer)* Did you see the words on the bottom of your map?

Lost Wanderer: "When you follow me, you're exactly where you are meant to be. Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Signed the Good Shepherd." This is him! This is the shepherd guy! He did find me!

Messenger: Yes he did. And he has a good path for you. Ask him to reveal it to you each morning and He will.

Boss: My turn! What is this about? *(Holds up cloth and magic eraser)* Does this mean I'm going to expand my corporate influence?

Messenger: Quite the opposite actually. This means you're being given the opportunity to serve. Starting Monday, you've taken on a volunteer job cleaning bathrooms at the local daycare.

Boss: Oh gross. But I've always been the guy who is large and in charge. It's who I am, how I know myself. Not the servant. My identity is being stolen here!

Messenger: Ah son, you are trying to control the world and it's not yours to control. The Master is taking away the false you, yes, but he's giving you the unbelievable gift of your real self. It's the person the Master knows, and he will satisfy your deepest longings. Trust him.

Lonely Girl: So who's coming to lunch?

Messenger: You are actually being given two gifts. Here's the first. *(Messenger gives her a big hug.)* And, he is coming to your house for lunch! *(Points at the Lost Wanderer)*

Lost Wanderer: Alright! I can see it here on the map for today! Sweet! *(They high five.)*

Joe/Angry: Do me! Do me! What's this cup about?

Messenger: The problem with your cup is that it's empty. But the Master has something for you. *(Pulls out a large jug of water and starts to pour it in.)*

Joe/Angry: Wow stop, it's overflowing! *(Laughing)* Stop, stop! It's too much.

Messenger: You are being given the gift of abundance and love overflowing. You are angry because you are empty. The Master can fill you up so you can speak kindly, be compassionate, laugh about the toilet seats that are up, while remembering to put them down, and allow the Master the opportunity to make things right. He *will* make them right in his good time.

Joe/Angry: *(Starts to laugh, then really starts to laugh hard, then stops abruptly.)* I need to go apologize to Christine.

Lonely Girl: I need to go grocery shopping for my lunch date.

Lost Wanderer: I'll come with you!

Boss: Well, I'd better get some clothes that can get dirty.

*(They exit)*

Messenger: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

A shepherd, a ruler, a saviour and a friend.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

*(Lights out.)*

**The End.**

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### **A Word from the Author**

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